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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY YEREVAN EMPHASIZES STATE OF THE UNION

REFS: A) YEREVAN 0145 B) YEREVAN 0150

SUMMARY

1. Embassy Yerevan took advantage of the public diplomacy opportunities provided by the President's State of the Union Address in a variety of events and formats. As a result, the Armenian media extensively covered the major foreign policy themes of the speech. Specifically, the Ambassador's February 3 press conference on the State of the Union Address received wide-spread press coverage, with more than 25 media outlets attending the event. Reports focused largely on issues related to Iran. The press also reported on President Bush's continued commitment to fighting the war on terror with our partners abroad during a ceremony marking a USG donation of counter-proliferation equipment to the GOAM. The Embassy posted English and Armenian versions of the State of the Union Address, as well as a press release on the Ambassador's press conference, on its website. To ensure that international policymakers were aware of President Bush's remarks, the Ambassador sent copies of the State of the Union Address to senior Armenian officials and international diplomats resident in Armenia. END SUMMARY.

EXTENSIVE COVERAGE OF AMBASSADOR'S PRESS CONFERENCE

2. The media extensively covered the Ambassador's February 3 press conference on the State of the Union Address, with more than 25 media outlets attending the event. Television stations aired clips of the State of the Union Address together with coverage of the Ambassador's press conference. Media outlets reported on the Ambassador's statements stressing America's commitment to ending tyranny and promoting democratic change.

3. The main focus of most coverage was the Ambassador's statements on Iran. "168 Hours," an opposition newspaper, reported, "U.S. Ambassador John Evans diplomatically shook his finger at the Armenian leadership, making it clear that in building relations with Iran, Armenia should not exceed [investment] limits." "Armenpress," a state-run news agency, published an article entitled, "U.S. Warns Armenia Not to Exceed the Investment Limit in Iran." The article says, "U.S. Ambassador to Armenia John Evans told a news conference today this his government understood Armenia's desire to diversify its energy resources, meaning a gas pipeline that Iran and Armenia are building, but added that every time he meets with the Armenian leadership, he warns them that the country may become subject to U.S. sanctions if it exceeds the investment limit in Iran." "Regnum," a Russian news agency, also reported on Ambassador Evans's statements concerning Iran, noting, "Evans pointed out three problems that his country has with Iran: support of terrorism, human rights violations, and its nuclear program." (For further information on Armenia's recent relations with Iran, please see reftels.)

EMBASSY OFFICIALS STRESS U.S. ASSISTANCE IN PUBLIC EVENTS

4. In accordance with President Bush's statement that, "For people everywhere, the United States is a partner for a better life," Embassy Yerevan officials emphasized U.S. assistance to Armenia at a number of events covered by the local press. Four television stations, two newspapers, and two news agencies reported on a February 3 press conference announcing the Embassy's donation of radiation detection equipment to the Armenian State Customs Committee. At the conference, the DCM stated, "In his annual address on the 'State of the Union' delivered in Washington on January 31, President Bush again reiterated the commitment of the United States to engage with our partners overseas to defeat terrorism. Today's event is a demonstration of the vital nature of our partnership with Armenia to ensure that terrorists do not have access to the most dangerous weapons, those which could bring indiscriminate mass destruction on peace-loving people." The press also widely covered a

January 31 event marking the launch of the USAID-funded Community Connections Program, which allows Armenian professionals to participate in internship programs in the United States. At the event, the Ambassador discussed U.S. assistance to Armenia and emphasized the importance of this exchange program for economic growth and the development of civil society. On the same day, the media reported on a ceremony celebrating the completion of U.S. Department of State-funded renovations to Pokr Mher Foundation School. During the ceremony, the DCM underlined America's commitment to assisting its partners around the world through assistance projects such as this one.

EMBASSY WEBSITE PRESENTS SPEECH IN ENGLISH AND ARMENIAN

15. At the top of its website homepage, the Embassy posted the full text of the State of the Union Address in English and Armenian. The website posting also includes English and Armenian versions of a news release on the Ambassador's press conference. Armenian citizens, and specifically journalists, look to the Embassy website as an up-to-date and reliable source of information on issues related to the U.S. Mission. On February 3, the day of the Ambassador's press conference, the website received 12,812 hits.

AMBASSADOR SENDS ADDRESS TO OFFICIALS AND DIPLOMATS

16. To ensure that international policymakers were aware of President Bush's remarks, the Embassy sent copies of the State of the Union Address to high-ranking Armenian officials and international diplomats resident in Armenia.

EVANS